SUPERVISION OF INSTRUCTION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GHANA:
TEACHERS’ AND HEADTEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is the account of my own research and that the main content, except to the contrary, is not substantially the same as any other dissertation that has been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

Signed: ........................................

(Peter Baffour-Awuah)
Abstract

School leaders use instructional supervision to improve teaching and learning by providing practising teachers with on-going support and guidance after their initial teacher training programmes. Public opinion and research studies have questioned the effectiveness of the supervisory process in Ghanaian public primary schools, however. The main purpose of this study is to better understand the practice of instructional supervision in the schools by examining teachers’ and headteachers’ perspectives about how they experienced and conceptualised instructional supervision. The study also sought to uncover aspects of instructional supervision that teachers and headteachers think should be practised.

A mixed method approach was employed to collect data from multiple sources including questionnaires, interviews, and policy documents on instructional supervision. Items for the questionnaires and interviews were guided by aspects of instructional supervision drawn from the literature and included both traditional practices such as monitoring and evaluating teachers’ work as well as more contemporary practices such as coaching and mentoring. The questionnaire included 24 Likert scale items and 4 open-ended items. For each Likert scale item, participants were asked to answer how often they experienced a particular practice as well as the extent to which they agreed that it should be practised.

A municipal education district in Ghana was selected for the study. Two hundred and forty out of 336 teachers and 40 out of 44 heads returned their questionnaires. In addition, 10 teachers, 10 heads and two officers (the district head of supervision and one from headquarters) were interviewed. The Ghana Education Service (GES) policy document on supervision was also analysed.

The study found that the GES policy document on instructional supervision emphasised aspects of instructional supervision that related to monitoring teaching activities and ensuring maximum use of instructional time. Teachers and headteachers in this study practised,
experienced and conceptualised instructional supervision which comprised mainly “traditional” aspects. While the participants were mostly happy about these traditional practices, they also thought that all of the contemporary aspects of instructional supervision that were included on the questionnaire should be practised much more often than they currently experienced. Responses from both the open-ended items and interview showed that some of the GES support systems may negatively impact the conduct of instructional supervision in schools.

This thesis concludes by recommending that education authorities consult with teachers to revise the GES policy guide on instructional supervision to include more contemporary practices, and also plan a long term budgetary allocation to provide sustainable training programmes to teachers and supervision personnel to improve instruction, and ultimately outcomes for students, in Ghanaian primary schools.
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Table of Contents

Content 

DECLARATION ii
ABSTRACT iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v
TABLE OF CONTENTS vii
LIST OF TABLES xiii
LIST OF FIGURES xiv

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1
   Background of the Study 1
   Statement of the Problem 3
   Purpose of the Study 5
   Research Questions 6
   Significance of the Study 6
   Brief Context of School Supervision in Ghana 6
   Decision-making about Supervision of Instruction within the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service 9
   Positionality of the Researcher 11
   Conclusion 12
   Definition of Terms 12

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 13
   Overview 13
   Personnel Responsible for School Supervision 13
   Concepts of Supervision 17
   Effective Supervision 24
   Historical Models of Supervision 27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervision as inspection</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision as social efficiency</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy in supervision</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific supervision</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision as leadership</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical supervision</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental supervision</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated model of supervision</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegial supervision</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approaches to Supervision</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive approach</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative approach</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-directive approach</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisor Characteristics and Supervisory Practices</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and respect</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for lesson observation</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal visits</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing lessons</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering suggestions</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelling lessons</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching resources</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Promoting collaboration

Challenges to Supervision

Knowledge and experience

Training

Professional support

Combining supervision with other duties

Teachers’ attitude and supervisors’ approach to supervision

Summary

Conclusion

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Research Design

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Data Collection Instrument

Administration and Retrieval of Instruments

Method of Data Analysis

Quality of Instruments/Data

Limitations to the Study

Conclusion

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Demographic Data

Group Comparison of Participants’ Responses to the Questionnaire Items

How Respondents Experienced Supervision of Instruction in their Schools

Traditional supervision practices

Supervision for assistance and support
C: Interview Schedule for Headteachers 228
D: Interview Schedule for Teachers 229
E: Interview Schedule for Head of Supervision, Headquarters 230
F: Interview Schedule for District Head of Supervision 231
G: Interview Consent Form 232
H: Information Letter 233
I: Ghana Education Service Performance Appraisal for Heads of Basic Schools 234
J: Comparison of Participants’ Responses to Questionnaire by Gender, Location and the Number of Years in Current Position 237
List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of Research Design
Table 2: Demographics of Questionnaire Respondents
Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by How Often They Experienced Traditional Supervision
Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by How Often They Experienced Assistance and Support
Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by How Often They Experienced Oversight Responsibilities
Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by How Often They Experienced Leadership Skills
Table 7: Distribution of Respondents by How Often They Experienced Professional Development
Table 8: Distribution of Respondents by How Often They Experienced Collaboration in Supervision
Table 9: Items showing Significant Differences between Teachers’ and Headteachers’ Opinions about Their Experiences
Table 10: Distribution of Respondents’ Opinions on Aspects of Traditional Supervision
Table 11: Distribution of Respondents’ Opinions on Aspects of Assistance and Support
Table 12: Distribution of Respondents’ Opinions on Aspects of Oversight Responsibilities
Table 13: Distribution of Respondents’ Opinions on Aspects of Leadership Skills
Table 14: Distribution of Respondents’ Opinions on Aspects of Professional Development
Table 15: Distribution of Respondents’ Opinions on Aspects of Collaboration
Table 16: Items showing Significant Differences between Teachers’ and Headteachers’ Opinions about how Supervision Should Be Practised
Table 17: Items showing Differences between Participants’ Experiences and Desire
List of Figures

Figure 1a. Suggesting to teachers how they should teach: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 1b. Using control to affect teachers’ instructional practices: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 1c. Inspecting teachers’ instructional practices for errors: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 2a. Helping teachers to find solutions to problems they encounter in their instructional practices: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 2b. Readily availing self for advice and instructional support: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 2c. Offering useful suggestions to improve instructional practices: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 2d. Ensuring that teachers have adequate teaching materials to teach: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 2e. Providing teachers with research findings about instruction: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 3a. Evaluating teachers’ classroom instructional practices: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 3b. Assessing teachers’ content knowledge: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 3c. Ensuring that teacher make good use of instructional time: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 3d. Making informal visits to classrooms: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 3e. Formally observing teaching and learning: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 4a. Praising teachers for specific teaching behaviour: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences
Figure 4b. Establishing open and trusting relationship with teachers: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 4c. Treating teachers professionally with sense of caring and respect: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 5a. Demonstrating teaching techniques: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 5b. Providing objective feedback about classroom observation: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 5c. Proving in-service workshops to teachers to develop their skills: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 5d. Implementing the use of action research in the school: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 6a. Engaging teachers in mutual dialogue to improve instruction: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 6b. Conferencing with teachers to plan for lesson observation: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 6c. Providing opportunities for teachers to meet and share ideas about instruction: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences

Figure 6d. Encouraging teachers to observe other teachers’ classrooms and programmes: teachers’ and headteachers’ experiences